HUMAN PERSONALITY AND FUTURE LIFE

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NOTE

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HUMAN PERSONALITY AND FUTURE LIFE

SINCE the days of early Greek speculation there have been prevalent in European thought two diametrically opposed ways of regarding the universe in which we human beings are stationed. The one may not inaptly be called the mechanical and the other the teleological point of view. According to the first, the world of reality is to be conceived as a complex of merely brute facts, a multiplicity of existent elements which somehow chance to be there. No meaning or purpose is exhibited by them; they simply are. And every change in the relations which they bear to one another is to be accounted for as completely determined by what has gone before, by the power they have of unconsciously operating *a tergo*. For every event which happens a cause may be assigned, but for no one of them can a reason be given; such explanation

as is possible consists in looking perpetually backward, in tracing one antecedent after another—a sort of treadmill exercise which never arrives at a terminus. On the other hand, when the teleological method is pursued, an attempt at any rate is made to interpret nature by conceiving of its parts as determined by the idea of the whole, to find meaning and purpose throughout exemplified, and to contemplate the sequence of events not as being merely blindly caused but as having a reason, difficult though it may be for us to discern what that reason is. As contrasted with the backward, this, then, may be called the forward view of things, since he who adopts it will be trying to discover, in respect to all that happens, an end which is being realised, an intention which is being fulfilled.

I have spoken of these two modes of explanation as being fundamentally opposed; and so, in an important sense, they clearly are. But they need not be. Within certain limits a mechanical

treatment of material things is, of course, legitimate enough; and the success to which it has led in various branches of scientific research is a sufficient vindication of its legitimacy. When, however, the physical scientist strays beyond the borders of his path, when he represents the mechanical scheme as affording a sufficient explanation of any fact or event, and as being, therefore, by implication a philosophy of nature, he is committing himself to a position which one may say without dogmatism is plainly untenable, and which cannot be so much as stated except at the cost of revealing its inconsistency.

Into that discussion I have, of course, no intention of entering. I am, however, persuaded that no one ever does really believe that the universe is merely a huge piece of mechanism. We all of us think of things as intelligibly related; we never conceive of physical processes being so correlated as to work accidentally together. Before the notion of a meaningless universe, which only exists to

run down, human intelligence, when it is in earnest, stands aghast. Human reason could not live in an environment which was in its constitution and contents essentially irrational. There must be, that is to say, correlation between the intellect and the intelligible, if we are to have either a rational mankind or any science of nature. Carelessly soever though we may employ the term "law" in reference to natural processes, we do at least intend to indicate by it the conviction that this is a rational world and no chaos. In short, the intelligibility of nature, or the possibility of its being interpreted in terms of mind, itself implies that nature is the embodiment or the expression of intelligence—the medium or vehicle of ideas which we can discover because they are akin to the ideas which we ourselves make use of in our own thinking. It seems to me, therefore, that a true philosophy must, in the last resort, be teleological—must, that is to say, endeavour to show that there is an end or purpose manifested in the cosmic

process, or, in other words, that there *is* evolution and not simply aimless change.

I

Not only so. I should agree with the distinguished modern thinker who used so strenuously to maintain that, as it must defend the truth of teleology in spite of former abuses of that principle, so must the philosophy of the coming time reassert the truth underlying the old view which made man the centre of the universe. In a material aspect, man is, doubtless, the denizen of an extremely obscure and tiny speck of the cosmic whole, which were we transported to the region of Sirius would not be so much as visible to us. And, judged solely in that way, it looks incredible that the universe could have been primarily designed to produce conscious natures such as ours; had it been so, "we might have expected to find a better proportion between the magnitude of the mechanism and the amount of the product." Life,

then, would appear to be an utterly unimportant by-product, an exotic, so to speak, occasioned by some freak on the part of nature, and we living creatures to be " somehow off the main line." But it needs, I take it, little reflexion to see that suggestions of this sort, although at first sight disquieting, are, in truth, destitute of any veritable cogency. Nothing surely can be more unphilosophical than an attempt to dwarf man's spirit by thrusting upon it the immensities of the material universe. After all, if human lives and human institutions were to have a station anywhere in the universe, it was bound to be on some specific portion of it, and why this earth should not have been that portion it is hard to divine. Admittedly, it is, comparatively speaking, a very little bit of the vast entirety. Yet, what of that? If man be, as, so far as our knowledge extends, he certainly is, the highest product of creation, it by no means follows that he must needs monopolize a prodigious area of cosmic space or that a planet of the solar

system is too insignificant a fragment of it for him to occupy. Material size or magnitude and intellectual or moral stature are simply incommensurable quantities; there is no common measure applicable to both. Indeed, in respect to the material universe itself, the tendency in recent science has been to emphasize the consideration that because an entity is small it is not therefore trivial. " The great scientist is," we are assured, " the one who recognises that what seems a petty detail is really of primary importance "; and the eminent astronomer who is to be President this year of the British Association insists that " if we want to understand the fundamental nature of things, it is to small-scale phenomena that we must turn our attention." [1] " We are driven to admit," writes Professor Whitehead, " that each object is in some sense ingredient throughout nature. . . . In a sense an electric charge is everywhere. The modification of the electromagnetic field at every point of

[1] Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe*, p. 44.

space at each instant owing to the past history of each electron is another way of stating the same fact." [1] His cosmic littleness need not, therefore, impair man's real greatness. "The most stupendous marvel in creation," an Italian philosopher has recently said, "is not the universe of stars, nor the universe of atoms, but the insatiably curious and dynamic spirit of man, always straining forward to catch the revelations of the universe." In short, human personality is the crowning stage and culmination of the whole trend of the huge evolutionary process, so far at least as we are familiar with it; all the preceding stages formed, it may be confidently said, the requisite means for bringing finite personalities into existence.

II

What, then, is it that constitutes personality? No one, I take it, will question the statement that personality involves consciousness, awareness, experience,

[1] *The Concept of Nature*, pp. 145–6.

or whatever name we choose to adopt for indicating that which differentiates a mind from all that is non-mental. Yet, clearly, personality implies much more than this. A mouse is conscious; that is to say, it perceives and feels and acts; but we should not ordinarily speak of mice as persons. So, too, personality presupposes individuality—it presupposes, in other words, a conscious subject that is one and identical throughout its changing states or processes, that persists amid a succession of experiences. This, again, is, however, not enough to determine personality. A sheep is presumably an individual subject, in this sense, and the shepherd knows each member of his flock. Once more, it may be asserted that a person is a thinking, rational individual being; and that assertion certainly leads us nearer to what we are in search of. Still, I for one would venture to doubt whether James Ward's collie dog, Jan, who "went with him to his lectures, leaving him at the door and returning at the exact hour to fetch him home

again; accompanied him on all his walks, and spent the evenings under his study table, ready with silent canine sympathy, shown by a great brown head laid on his knee, if some sigh or groan had betrayed that *Denken* was more than usually *schwer*," [1] could have been altogether devoid of the capacity of thinking or reasoning. It is only, I would urge, when thought or reason has reached a particular stage of development, only when it has become deliberate, self-conscious, thinking or reasoning, that it can be said to be a differentiating mark of personality. Accordingly, I should describe personality as individuality that has become aware of itself, individuality that has become being-for-self. In the act of becoming self-conscious an individual mind gathers itself together, so to speak, frees itself from its world, yet in so doing prepares the way for being free in and by means of its world.

Obviously, so conceived, personality exhibits endless degrees of penetration

[1] See Mrs. Campbell's *Memoir* of her father prefixed to Ward's *Essays in Philosophy*, p. 91.

and comprehensiveness; it is always in the making and never completely made. In its earliest stages the consciousness of self would have been but little removed from mere bodily feeling; only there would have been a vague, dim awareness of the body as not merely something seen or handled, but as implicated in the process of seeing or handling. And the whole development of man's mental life may be looked upon as the gradual way in which there comes to be increasingly definite apprehension of the self as peculiar to the individual and of a world of objects distinct therefrom. There is a profound dictum of Spinoza's to the effect that our knowledge of self increases with every increase in our knowledge of external nature. Let it be added, however, that the self which the individual thus gradually comes to know is never perceived as an object, not even as an inner object. It is that which is implicated in all our mental states or processes, but is not the single object of any. We cannot take the "I" out of ourselves, so to

speak, and put it " there " before us. It is thought, or reflected upon, *along with* (*mitgedacht*) what we call objects, but it is not one of them.

So far, I have been considering what are sometimes named the theoretical functions of mind. I am, however, by no means oblivious of the fact that the individual only becomes self-conscious as acting, in the practical sense, as self-determining. A purely cognitive individual—if there could be such an entity—would, it is safe to say, never attain to self-consciousness. And it has, of course, to be remembered that as practically active the human individual is always a member of some social community, and that his motives and impulses are largely determined in their character by the relations in which he stands to other individuals. It is to a great extent through the stress and pressure of common action that personality becomes a real factor in his inner life, and it is no exaggeration to say that in the notion of self as a person there are contained features which would

be wholly wanting in the experience of an absolutely isolated individual. Yet it is necessary to add that the practical activity of a self-conscious agent is not to be identified with bodily activity. A self-conscious agent acts by making a represented course of action an end for himself, by selecting or choosing and resolving. His action, in other words, is, or always may be, free action. No other meaning can be assigned to the word " free " in this context than just the faculty of being able to determine as a self what one's course of action shall be. But, while thus recognising the fundamental part played by practical activity in the development of personality, I want to enter a protest against any attempt to picture it as something entirely different from intellectual activity. A mind is not made up of a number of air-tight compartments; it operates invariably as a unity. In knowing, the mind is essentially active; in doing it is essentially cognitive. There is willing or volition involved in every intellectual enterprise; there is knowing

or cognising involved in every practical endeavour. A human personality is always purposive, always his aims are directed towards ends conceived by him as goods. The difference between so-called practical and intellectual activity is to be discerned not so much in the mental processes themselves as in the particular ends the realisation of which is desired. The *purpose* of the manufacturer is different from that of the scientific investigator or artist or social reformer. His mind or self is engaged upon producing a different result, upon realising a different end. Mere intellect and mere will are, in other words, vicious abstractions.

Having, then, now sought to indicate what is involved in personality as distinguished from what we might perhaps call subjectivity, I would lay stress upon a consideration too frequently, I think, lost sight of—this, namely, that in the entire course of terrestrial evolution there has been nothing in the remotest degree comparable in significance and importance with the seemingly inconspicu-

ous transition from the stage of consciousness to that of self-consciousness. It has meant a completely new start in the development of mind; with its advent, evolution began to take an altogether different direction.[1]

Let me try to make clear what I mean. The tribe of animals most nearly akin to man in bodily structure, that of the "anthropoids," has existed on this earth a far longer time than the human species. These animals have had, therefore, so far as time is concerned, a greater opportunity than human beings have had to develop their latent powers. Yet, what do we find? We find that, as a matter of fact, they continue to be to-day very much what their ancient ancestors were; they make their abodes in the old fashion, they live on the same kind of food, they retain the old habits —in fine, they are as remote as ever they were from any approach to the ways of civilization. In the case of human beings, however—or, at all events, in the case of those races of them that

[1] Cf. T. H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics.*

have progressed—the story is quite otherwise. Man started, no doubt, by dwelling in caves and forests, but the crucial point is that he has not continued to dwell there. Step by step, he has practically converted this earth into a *human* home. Where disharmony prevailed between himself and his physical surroundings, he has not waited instinctively for its removal by a gradual adaptation of himself to the "necessities of the situation"; he has set to work to transform those surroundings. He has drained the marsh and irrigated the desert. Hence towns and cities and cultivated lands have obliterated even the remnants of his primordial habitations; he has disciplined and trained himself in the arts to such an extent that well-nigh the entire surface of the globe has become an exhibition of his skill and creativeness. In other words, it is not now the living organism that adapts itself to the environment, it is rather the environment that is so modified as to suit the requirements of the living organism. Again, while the communal

life of man probably began in a rude herding together for the purposes of defence and of aggressive attacks upon others, yet out of that stage of barbarism human beings have emerged, and built up states and a multiplicity of social institutions, by means of which law is maintained, order secured, the freedom of individuals respected, and the graces and refinements of cultured existence rendered possible. Thus it is that civilization has arisen and advances, that intellectual achievement has widened and deepened, and history, as we understand it, has been made. Man's speech may have commenced with crude sounds and interjections, cries expressive of pain or fear, pleasure or contentment, such as the animals make use of; but, by degrees, he came to express his meaning in sentences, words were formed, and that marvellous instrument, language, was, in the course of ages, constructed. Then literature, in its wondrous variety, as the record of a people's ideas and thoughts, beliefs and aspirations, has sprung into being, and enabled that to

be preserved which the human mind in its long gropings after truth and beauty has won and created.

As a result, men and women have gradually in the course of history attained to the realisation that they are in the midst of a vast spiritual environment, more potent far in the moulding of souls or personalities than the merely natural environment could conceivably be. And, on the one hand the recognition of it transforms for them the natural environment itself; what evinced itself previously as mere brute fact is now seen to be full of meaning and suggestiveness. Wordsworth could discern "Presences of Nature in the sky and on the earth," and "Souls of lonely places"; and, as Whitehead avers, thus "expresses the *concrete* facts of our apprehension, facts which are distorted in the scientific analysis."[1] On the other hand, the spiritual environment as such embraces those timeless verities which it has become usual to designate values—ideals of truth, of beauty, and

[1] *Science and the Modern World*, p. 118.

of goodness. These are not subjective in character—figments of our imagination or understanding; they belong to the world of reality no less certainly than atoms and molecules. They are not, indeed, material existents, nor even mental existents. But they have a mode of being of their own, which, while doubtless intimately related to the realm of existent fact, is not part of it. Some of them—moral values, in particular—can be realised in personalities, and only in personalities; yet, in so realising any one of them the individual person is conscious that he is guided by a norm or standard which is no creation of his own.

III

1. Now, it was just the discovery that the reality which here and now encompasses us contains infinitely more than the unreflective mind can recognise that furnished the basis for Plato's daring attempt to prove the soul's immortality in that great dialogue of his,

the *Phaedo*, which has influenced so profoundly the thought of the Western world. I have been speaking of the spiritual environment; and that, after all, is in one sense another name for what Plato called the realm of essences (εἴδη)—" visible to reason alone that is the lord of the soul." The eternity of these essences guarantees, so Plato virtually maintained, the immortality of the intellect that is apprehensive of them. The soul is, so he conceived, a denizen of two worlds. So far as its life is occupied with the things of sense, it inhabits the temporal world; so far as it is rational in character, its " kinship " is with the essences. And this kinship is at the root of the divine impulse which engenders the quest of absolute truth, beauty and virtue. The soul comes to know these, to assimilate their content, and hence to participate in their eternity. Thus,

" Discovered is the land of our rebirth,
A world of rest within this world of strife,
The steadfastness that bears the life of earth
Reveals already the immortal life."

I am not, it need hardly be said, wishing to suggest that an argument of this kind can be presented in such a manner as to be convincing to thoughtful persons of the present time, although I am persuaded that there is more of validity in it than is apparent on the surface. It is vitiated, however, by one radical defect. While there is no doubt that Plato himself did believe that the individual soul continues to exist after the death of the body, this argument would seem to imply that in the future, if, indeed, one could in such a case speak of a future, its mode of being would be of that timeless nature which belongs to the essences. But, as a concrete existent, a self-conscious individual cannot be other than temporal in character.[1] A self-conscious mind

[1] It is true that Plato never meant to assert that the individual soul is an ἔιδος, and that in the *Laws* (x. 904) he expressly asserts that souls are not eternal in the sense in which that is true of the εἴδη. Nevertheless, I think the argument in the *Phaedo* logically leads to the conclusion that they do become eternal, in that sense, when separated from the body.

may and does apprehend what is timeless; but the *act* of apprehending, just in virtue of its being an act, is *ipso facto* an event which takes place in time. On the other hand, the essences as timeless are not concrete individual existents; and they are not conscious either of themselves or of aught beside.

It is worth while dwelling for a moment on this point because the future life is so often vaguely pictured as life in a world in which time shall be no more. The fact is a timeless life is a contradiction in terms. Life implies successiveness as its primary condition. Yet even Professor Taylor argues that, although, in regard to finite souls, successiveness and futurity can never wholly vanish, yet they may become of decreasing importance beyond all assignable limit. And to illustrate what he means he instances the case of Mozart, who is supposed to have spoken of his ability to hear his own compositions "all at once" by an interior audition, and of the incommunicable rapture of

the experience.[1] Yes; that no doubt is a common experience of great musicians, and, in lesser degree, of those who appreciate their work. But, in such an experience, the act of hearing the composition 'all at once' is no less a temporal event than are the acts of hearing it piecemeal. The composition could not be *heard*, either "all at once" or piecemeal save in and through the temporal act of *hearing*. It is possible, Professor Taylor further urges, to attain to a knowledge of the successive which would involve no uncertainty, and no element of surprise. And he goes on to say that "the successiveness would be *wholly* in the things known; it would not be a successiveness in the knower, or his knowing." Now, this seems to me to be simply contrary to fact. A successiveness in things may certainly be apprehended in and by *one* act of knowing, but such an act of knowing is always itself an act of specific duration, which has been preceded by and which will be followed by other acts of knowing.

[1] *The Faith of a Moralist*, i, pp. 425 *sqq.*

In no sense, therefore, can it be said to be taken out of the stream of succession. Moreover, eliminate from your notion of a future world the idea of a being who wills, who seeks, strives, hopes and accomplishes; eliminate, I say, that, and in what conceivable respect would such a being be one and identical with the personality you have here known and admired and loved?

I can, then, derive no help from the thought of a future in which time shall be no more. Nevertheless, looked at in another way, there is value in Plato's argument. It is valuable, namely, inasmuch as it induces us to realise the supreme worth of knowledge and of knowing minds in the general scheme of things. Can we reasonably suppose, Plato was virtually asking, that we are all passing to a realm where knowledge is no more, because knowing minds have there ceased to be? If, as he deemed certain, there is a sphere of truth beyond the likes and dislikes of men, if truths are valid, not because of our consent but independently of it,

if there be a region of absolute necessity, to which everything in nature, actual or possible, must conform, then surely it *is* inconceivable that the period will come when all knowledge of it will vanish. What significance would it then have in a mindless universe? In moments of despondency, a man may, having regard to the narrowness of his own field of knowledge, persuade himself that it can matter not to the general scheme of things whether his poor personality shall survive or no. But, can he contemplate in like complacency the thought of death as the final issue of the lives of *all* men? Does it seem to him a thing of indifference, looked at from the point of view I have mentioned, whether or no a Socrates, a Dante, a Shakespeare, a Newton, or a Goethe have been blotted out of existence? Dr. Martineau declared that he knew not anything in nature comparable in wastefulness with the extinction of great minds. "Their gathered resources, their matured skill, their luminous insight, are not like instincts that can be

handed down; they are absolutely personal and inalienable; grand conditions of future power, unavailable for the race, and perfect for an ulterior growth of the individual." [1] And, even if there were no God, it would still remain true that of such spirits, finely touched to fine issues, it is no more incredible that from actual being they should continue to be than that from not having been they once were. On the other hand, if there be a God, that they should be suffered to sink into non-entity is surely a sheer impossibility.

I do not, however, hesitate to affirm that belief in God carries with it as a necessary consequence belief in the conservation not only of the towering personalities of our humanity but likewise that of humbler souls who lay no claim to exceptional intellectual powers. For they, too, are knowing minds; and, although their knowledge be comparatively limited and circumscribed, yet in every single instance it is unique, and bears with it the promise and the

[1] *Study of Religion*, ii, p. 378.

potency of endless growth and fertility. We can scarcely imagine the Kingdom of Heaven as being modelled after the plan of our modern Universities, entrance to which is only to be obtained by passing a preliminary examination. But there are other aspects of the human spirit, which, when duly weighed, render the thought of annihilation hardly less impossible.

2. The observation that the most conclusive reasons for believing in a future destiny of the human soul are those which are furnished by ethical considerations has become well-nigh a commonplace.

Long ago, Aristotle laid it down as a fundamental principle that there must be a supreme moral end, an absolute Good, if moral action is to be possible at all. We cannot, he argued, go on and on, perpetually desiring some particular end simply as a means to another, because in such a case there would be no rational plan or purpose in our lives. Our lives would be like the waves of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. If,

then, there is to be unity of self-conscious experience, if human conduct is to form a consistent whole, there must be a final goal at which to aim, an end desirable in itself and not as a means to anything further. The short and decisive way in which Aristotle sought to establish his point may be unsatisfactory. But I think it can be shown that the facts of the moral life *do* force us to recognise the being of an ultimate moral ideal, the being, namely, of that through the realising of which man's personality would attain full satisfaction, and the human agent enabled to get out of life everything of value which life has in it to yield. We can, it is true, describe this ideal in no other than quite general terms, simply because it *is* an ideal; whereas, in order to form an exhaustive conception of it, we should need to have actualised it. But of the fact that all genuine moral progress, on the part either of the individual or of a society, has found its inspiration in the thought of a Good infinitely surpassing any good so far achieved a

casual survey of human history is almost sufficient to convince us. " The practical struggle after the Better, of which the idea of there being a Best has been the spring, has taken such effect in the world of man's affairs as makes the way by which the Best is to be more nearly approached plain enough to him that will see." [1]

But, now, few of us would venture to affirm that in this earthly existence anything more than a gradual approximation to this ideal is ever possible or ever likely to become possible. It is, indeed, precisely the noblest and most self-sacrificing of men and women who are the readiest to admit that the Good towards which they have been striving has proved to be beyond their grasp, that the far-off goal has seemed constantly to recede as they have advanced. The moral ideal, which has been the mainspring of their efforts, dwarfs in their eyes all their actual achievement, because, with every step forward, their apprehension of it enlarges and expands, so that

[1] T. H. Green: *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 180.

in its light such virtue or heroism as is theirs appears dim and unworthy.

Is there, then, to be no solution of this contradiction between the ideal and the actual? Is it to remain man's destiny continually to pursue and never to completely attain? Is it to be always progress towards fruition and never fruition itself? He who puts those questions fairly to himself can hardly avoid acknowledging that an affirmative answer seems, at least, incongruous and repellent.

Not surprising is it, therefore, to find many of our greatest moralists insisting that our moral life would be stultified at the core were we to become assured that its supreme end is, from the very nature of the case, unreachable. Though, under present conditions, it be unattainable, the very fact that we are here under an obligation to make it our end or aim is a sufficient guarantee that it is not intrinsically unrealisable. Now, if this conviction of theirs be justified, and if it be likewise granted that the moral life is that which most

truly characterises self-conscious personalities, it can scarcely be questioned that there are strong grounds for holding that moral progress cannot be arrested either by the advent of bodily death or by the "vast death of the solar system." Not only so. Seeing that individual souls, in so far as, by manifold struggles and self-denials, they have been building up here a chastened and refined moral nature, fully equipped for further enterprise—would there not be involved an enormous waste of precious spiritual power if they are doomed to drop out of existence precisely when they have become best fitted for dutiful and beneficent service?

I know that it has not seldom been urged, in opposition to any such line of thought as the foregoing, that, while the pursuit of Good is the indispensable condition of our moral nature, its complete attainment would mean the suffocation and destruction of our moral nature. In a sphere where all personalities were fully developed, where there were no evils to overcome, no wrongs

to redress, no abuses to be remedied, there would be no inducement to effort, nothing to prompt to action, and in such case that which is pre-eminently characteristic of moral life, as we are familiar with it, would have ceased to be. The sense of Duty and obligation would be no more. A condition of monotony and *ennui* would prevail, which would soon become intolerable. The painting of any paradise or utopia, in heaven or on earth, awakens, it has been said, longings for nirvana and escape. " If *this* be the whole fruit of the victory," writes William James ; " if the generations of mankind suffered and laid down their lives ; if prophets confessed and martyrs sang in the fire, and all the sacred tears were shed for no other end than that a race of creatures of such unexampled insipidity should succeed, and protract in *saecula saeculorum* their contented and inoffensive lives—why, at such a rate, better lose than win the battle, or, at all events, better ring down the curtain before the last act of the play, so that a business that began so

importantly may be saved from so singularly flat a winding-up." [1]

That this indignant protest had a large measure of justification I am not in the least concerned to dispute. But I think we are deeply indebted to Professor Taylor for a very convincing piece of reasoning designed to show that, even were the goal of the moral life reached, it would not leave those who had arrived at the end of their journey with nothing to do.[2] As he points out, there might well be progress *in* fruition where there is no longer progress *towards* fruition. And he gives examples to illustrate his meaning. "Even in a society where every member was in actual enjoyment of the ' beatific vision,' it would still remain the fact that some see more of the infinite wealth of the vision than others," and might well have a " social service " to discharge in helping their fellows to see. Moreover, he contends that the conception of heaven as adventureless is altogether

[1] *The Will to Believe and Other Essays*, p. 168.
[2] *Op. cit.* vol. 1, pp. 408 *sqq.*

without warrant. " There is no sufficient reason why the disappearance of wrong, within or without ourselves, to be put right should put an end to adventure and novelty. Even in a life where there was direct vision of God, we can readily understand that no vision could ever be complete, just because the object of vision is infinitely rich; there would always be the aspiration to see further, prompted by the splendour of the vision already granted, and we may readily conceive of this aspiration as only to be satisfied by bold adventure in self-forgetfulness."

3. Let us turn, lastly, to the emotional side of personal existence. All true personality, it has been maintained, leads up to and culminates in love —the discerning and enlightened love of a knowing and freely willing mind. But, however this may be, certain it is that it would be difficult to gauge all for which that word stands in this human world of ours. Love, in the larger sense of the term—crude, instinctive love in the primitive stages,

no doubt, but still love—has been from the commencement a central factor in the upward trend of human life. Ever assuming purer and finer forms, it has been gradually, down the ages, deepening its hold upon the members of our social communities, and constantly tending towards expansion of the merely single self, culminating only when the joys and sorrows, the triumphs and disasters of countless other selves are felt by the individual as his own.

Now, the disparity between the brevity of an earthly life on the one hand and its inexhaustible capacity for loving and tender devotion on the other is an old and well-worn theme—old, but ever new by reason of perpetual re-discovery. Who can measure the stream of blessing that flows with spontaneous profusion from a loving and faithful soul? " Can we love," then, " but on condition that the thing we love must die? " In the labyrinth of earthly bereavement, when the light of our own life has fled, and the help on which we were wont to lean has fallen from our side, do we

really believe it to be the last sad mission of such love to become the cause of our direst misery? Far from it; even in the hours of bewildering grief, that thought, I make bold to say, does *not* intrude. Rather does even the sceptically inclined intellect feel then with Emerson, that "what is excellent as God lives is permanent."[1]

"Hearts are dust, heart's loves remain,
Heart's love will meet thee yet again."

Love, then, would seem to confirm and strengthen the trust which the other aspects of human nature engender.

[1] A striking instance of this I may be allowed to put on record. Mrs. T. H. Huxley shared, I take it, her husband's doubts as to the reality of a future life. Yet in a beautiful little volume of poems, of which I am fortunate enough to possess a copy, she is to be found more than once using language which would have no meaning had not the aspiration in question been actually alive within her. For example, in one touching poem, written after his death, she tells of her longing that "*he* could but behold (with her) the sun go down behind the hills." And then, recounting how her lost Love had "swept her strings of life with music," she exclaims:

"O dream! it must be as God wills
Till we two meet beyond the hills."

Love would seem indubitably to testify that *it* is stronger than death. No one has brought out the inner meaning of that testimony more powerfully than Browning. Recall how David, having charmed away the madness of Saul by the tunes of his lyre, flings aside his instrument, and seeks to give utterance to the faith which is in him. Before him stands the wreck and ruin of a king, seemingly the destruction of all that had once been great. Yet David finds within himself a love and an affection for his master—a desire, a craving for Saul's continued personal existence—so fervid and deep that words could convey no idea of its intensity. "Can I, a frail creature, possessed only of faculties that have been bestowed, of a nature that has been given, can I," he pleads, "rise to the height of an affection which God, its bestower, its giver, does not feel?"

"Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?"

Can the love I feel be greater than the love I ought to trust? That, surely, were to harbour an unworthy notion of the Divine Reality. Who is there that, when in the presence of a sad and heavy bereavement, has not rather in the stillness been conscious of a loftier resignation, and felt the truth of things to be nearer to him then than in the dull moods of a despairing mind?

Only one word more. "It doth not yet appear," so an author in the New Testament asserts, "what we shall be." Is it not really better so? Often, I know, we men and women feel otherwise. We are wont to imagine that our earthly existence would be incalculably richer, that the entire face of it would be charged for us with new meaning, if the fact of a sequel could be rendered as certain as to-morrow's sunrise, that our actions would be nobler and worthier could we but definitely relate our allotted span of years here to a great future, and thus see life singly and see it whole. But is it, after all, so clear that it would

be so? May it not well be the case that one of the preparations that will serve to qualify us for entering upon a higher plane of being is that we should first learn to appreciate the inherent wealth, significance and beauty of what we may here enjoy? If our present sphere of activity offers countless opportunities for the work of moulding souls; if human knowledge and love are here and now intrinsically valuable for their own sakes and not simply for anything to which they may lead, then it may not inconceivably be a wise provision for the development of our personalities that the details of the experience to follow this should for the present be screened from our view. Such, at any rate, was the teaching of the greatest philosopher of modern times. At first sight, Kant writes, nature seems, in this regard, to have treated us in a "step-motherly fashion." But, unless our whole character were at the same time changed, it might well be that with "God and eternity, in their awful majesty, ceaselessly before our eyes,"

we should be always troubling ourselves about the future, instead of acting here from the thought of duty and with unselfish disposition. "Thus," he concludes, "what the study of nature and of man teaches us sufficiently elsewhere may well be true here also, that the inscrutable wisdom by which we exist is not less worthy of admiration in what it has withheld than in what it has granted."

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